



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

A Sketch of the History of the Apostolic Church. By OLIVER J. THATCHER, of the University of Chicago. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1893. 12mo, pp. 312.

This brief sketch of the Early Church treats in ten chapters: the Condition of the World in Apostolic Times; the Expansion of Judaism; the Spread of Christianity; the Church in Jerusalem during the first fourteen years; Breaking the Jewish bonds; the Burning Question, that is, the relation of Gentile and Jewish Christianity; the Best Years of Paul; the Last Years of Paul; the Opposition to Christianity, both by Jews and heathen; then Authorities, Government and Worship, with a conclusion pointing out some lines of post-apostolic development in the Church.

The heart and body of the book is the work of St. Paul, which includes nearly two-thirds of the whole (pp. 89-273). Preceding this we have an account of the Roman-Greek world, in which the gospel was to spread, and of the Judaism of the Dispersion, which was a fore-runner of Christianity among the Gentiles.

This introductory account is very clear, interesting, and suggestive. It shows that the popular statements still heard about the Gospel spreading fast because heathenism had lost its power, are not true. Christianity did more than occupy a religious vacuum. As a matter of fact it spread in opposition to a revival of paganism, which included more and more the learning, culture and power of the Empire. Peasants, priests and philosophers were met by post-apostolic Christianity all in the ranks of orthodox heathenism. The chapter on the expansion of Judaism also calls attention to a link in the development of the church too little noticed. Thatcher dedicates his book "to my teacher, Professor Adolf Harnack;" and from this part of his work on the influence of Harnack is frequently visible. He makes prominent Hellenic Judaism as the great stepping stone from Jewish Christianity to the Gentile world. We think, however, that Thatcher (p. 32) goes too far in saying "many heathen became proselytes. They were circumcised, observed the whole law," etc. The number of Gentiles who submitted to circumcision seems never to have been very great. It was a horror and utter disgust to Greeks and Romans; hence the vast majority of Jewish proselytes were women. They were never regarded as of equal standing with native Israelites, and it is hardly correct to say they "lived entirely as Jews."

Passing to the apostolic history proper we find a very fresh narrative, touching with sure hand the leading features of life and teaching. The only drawback felt in reading these glowing pages is the questionable influence of Ritschl's theology, of which Harnack is an intense advocate. Such a tendency leads Thatcher to shrink from recognizing the miraculous in the New Testament. He says of the vision of Peter (Acts 10:9 ff.) "it required a great deal of supernatural machinery to bring him to preach to a heathen" (p. 40).

That sounds like Horace and his "nec Deus ex machina." Of Peter's escape through an angel's help it is said, "in a remarkable way (he) escaped." Of the destruction of Jerusalem it is remarked, "it was believed that Jesus had foretold its destruction" (p. 302). The Holy Spirit saying, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul," it is "wrong to attribute to some supernatural and uncommon manifestation" (p. 118). The Holy Spirit forbidding Paul to enter Bithynia (Acts 16:7) is described as "again something intervened, which closed the way" (p. 164). Harnack's teachings about the "charismatic" church are fully applied here, so that all the inspiration of New Testament Apostles and writers is declared to be nothing more than the spiritual enlightenment common to all believers. It was but the highest expression of the Christian consciousness of the time. Was there any objective element in such revelation? Probably not, for Thatcher continues: "What room or place was there for the thought of a special inspiration which should give its possessor an absolute authority?" (p. 289). Such an extreme view leads further to the statement that the Old Testament was "forever done away" by Paul. The mediatorship of Christ is minimized, for every believer has "the same deep, strengthening intercourse with God which Jesus himself enjoyed" (p. 72). Then the old ear-mark of Ritschl's teachings "no metaphysics in religion" is given its place. Under this Kantian theology even the divinity of Christ fades away as an unsubstantial figment, for Thatcher says, borrowing from Hatch, "the oneness of Jesus with the Father in love, will, and purpose was replaced by a oneness in substance" (p. 306).

Space does not permit us to dwell upon the many excellences of this sketch of the apostolic church. No better book has appeared on the subject in America; and that is the reason why we have ventured the rather to indicate some points which the student must receive with due caution.

H. M. SCOTT.

Chicago Theological Seminary.